

REMARKS

Claims 1-22 and 24-35 are pending. Claims 1-14, 16-20, 22, 25-26, 28-³⁶~~37~~ are rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a). Claims 15, 21, 23-24, 27, and 37 are objected to as depending from a rejected base claim. Claims 23 and 36-37 are cancelled without prejudice. Claims 1, 15, 24, and 28 are currently amended.

Applicant requests entry of the foregoing amendment and believes it will place the instant application in condition for allowance. Alternatively, applicant requests entry of the foregoing amendment as presenting rejected claims in better form for consideration on appeal under 37 C.F.R. § 116(b).

Claim 15 is objected to as depending from a rejected base claim, but would be allowable if rewritten in independent form including all of the limitations of the base claim and any intervening claims. Claim 15 depends from claim 14 which depends directly from claim 1. Claim 15 is rewritten in independent form to include all the limitations of claims 1 and 14. Thus, claim 15 is patentable under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) over Sourour et al. (U.S. Pat. No. 6,147,982) in view of Nystrom et al. (U.S. Pat. No. 6,526,091).

Claim 23 is objected to as depending from a rejected base claim, but would be allowable if rewritten in independent form including all of the limitations of the base claim and any intervening claims. Claim 23 depends directly from claim 1. Claim 1 is rewritten to include all the limitations of claim 23. Thus, claim 1 and depending claims 2-14, 16-22, and 24-27 are patentable under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) over Sourour et al. in view of Nystrom et al.

Claim 37 is objected to as depending from a rejected base claim, but would be allowable if rewritten in independent form including all of the limitations of the base claim and any intervening claims. Claim 37 depends from claim 36 which depends directly from independent claim 28. Claim 28 is rewritten to include all the limitations of claims 36 and 37.

Thus, claim 28 and depending claims 29-36 are patentable under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) over Sourour et al. in view of Nystrom et al.

In view of the foregoing, applicant respectfully requests reconsideration and allowance of claims 1-22 and 24-35. If the Examiner finds any issue that is unresolved, please call applicant's attorney by dialing the telephone number printed below.

Respectfully submitted,



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